

Are there income differences in the impact of a national reimbursement policy for smoking cessation treatment and accompanying media attention? Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Netherlands Survey

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: This study examined possible income differences in the impact of a national reimbursement policy for smoking cessation treatment and accompanying media attention in the Netherlands in 2011.

METHODS: We used three waves of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Netherlands Survey, a nationally representative longitudinal sample of smokers aged 15 years and older (n=1912). The main analyses tested trends and income differences in outcome measures (smokers' quit attempt rates, use of behavioral counseling, use of cessation medications, and quit success) and awareness variables (awareness of reimbursement possibilities, the media campaign, medications advertisements and other media attention) with generalized estimating equations analyses.

RESULTS: In the first half of 2011, there was a significant increase in quit attempts (odds ratio (OR)=2.02, $p<0.001$) and quit success (OR=1.47, $p<0.001$). Use of counseling and medications remained stable at 3% of all smokers in this period. Awareness of reimbursement possibilities increased from 11% to 42% (OR=6.38, $p<0.001$). Only awareness of the media campaign was associated with more quit attempts at the follow-up survey (OR=1.95, $p<0.001$). Results were not different according to smokers' income level.

CONCLUSIONS: The Dutch reimbursement policy with accompanying media attention was followed by an increase in quit attempts and quit success, but use of cessation treatment remained stable. The impact of the policy and media attention did not seem to have decreased or increased socioeconomic inequalities in quit attempts, use of cessation treatment, or quit success.

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